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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000700

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HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2028  
TAGS: PREL PGOV SNAR PTER PHUM VE

SUBJECT: FARC DATA FALLOUT: NERVOUS BRV IS LASHING OUT

REF: CARACAS 000684

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Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR DANIEL LAWTON,  
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶11. (S) Summary. Former Chief of Staff to the Vice President Rene Arreaza and Office of Narcotics Affairs (ONA) Director Nestor Reverol met separately with the DCM and DEA Chief on May 20 and 19, before the Ambassador's May 20 meeting with Foreign Minister Maduro. Arreaza and Reverol revealed that President Chavez and other senior BRV officials are agitated in the wake of Interpol's validation of the FARC computers and defensive about U.S. criticism of Venezuela's lack of counternarcotics cooperation. Arreaza said BRV accusation that Colombian soldiers crossed the Venezuelan border on May 16 was a set-up designed to distract public attention from the Interpol report. Reverol said Justice and Interior Minister Chacin is advocating that the BRV refrain from any international counternarcotics cooperation. Reverol also warned that the BRV is looking for any incident on the Venezuelan border to exploit. End Summary.

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Arreaza: CN Sensitivities  
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¶12. (C) Rene Arreaza requested to see the DCM May 20 to complain about ONDCP Director Walters' recent comments reported in the local media criticizing the BRV for its lack of international counternarcotics (CN) cooperation. Arreaza claimed that every time BRV Ambassador to Washington Bernie Alvarez is close to persuading President Chavez and Justice and Interior Minister Chacin to restart CN cooperation with the USG, the ONDCP Director makes public comments that permits BRV radicals to scuttle such cooperation. DCM responded that the BRV showed no signs of real interest in CN cooperation, noting the difficulties in arranging a CN briefing for National Assembly members. Arreaza conceded the point, adding that he thought Office of Narcotics Affairs (ONA) Director Reverol is more corrupt than his predecessor.

¶13. (C) Arreaza said the BRV accusations of a May 16 Colombian military border incursion into Apure State was an event the BRV was anticipating and was waiting for the Colombian soldiers "with the cameras rolling." He said the BRV had been waiting for just this type of minor incident to exploit. Arreaza conceded that senior BRV leaders are nervous about the FARC computer revelations and are looking for distractions. He noted that the May 17 violation of Venezuelan airspace (Reftel) gave the BRV an unexpected

bonus. Arreaza also queried at the request of former Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel whether the overflight was deliberate. The DCM said it was inadvertent. Arreaza said he would convey that message back to Rangel, who would likely convey it to Chavez.

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Reverol: Chacin Against CN Cooperation  
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¶4. (S) ONA Director Reverol asked to meet with DEA country attachQ May 19 ostensibly to find out more about the Ambassador's May 17 visit to a USG drug demand reduction program in Petare, a poor, densely populated area of Caracas.

(Note: Reverol had not contacted anyone in the DEA since around March 1 when Minister of Justice Ramon Rodriguez Chacin prohibited Venezuelan law enforcement from having "any contact with the Americans." Previously DEA and Reverol met openly two to three times a week. End Note.) Reverol, showing a mixture of exhaustion and disgust, told DEA attachQ that "everything was crazy" in the Justice and Interior Ministry and that Minister Chacin is advocating that the BRV cease all cooperation with all foreign law enforcement agencies. (Note: CN international cooperation is already so poor that Reverol has not spoken to the British Special Organized Crime Agency (SOCA) in almost three months and the German Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) are pulling out from the vetted police unit in Nueva Esparta State. End Note). Reverol lamented that Chacin, who had prohibited Venezuelan participation in the Andean session of the International Drug Enforcement Conference (IDEC) in March, has not authorized Venezuelan participation in the global IDEC this July in Istanbul.

¶5. (S) Reverol also said Chavez, Maduro and Chacin are "fuming" over Ambassador Duddy's May 17 visit to Petare, a

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Chavista neighborhood, to hand out course completion certificates to participants for a NAS funded demand reduction program. (Note: On May 19, ONA suspended the ONA certification of the NGO that implemented a NAS-funded demand reduction program in Petare - Septel. End Note). Reverol warned that things were "heating up" on Venezuela's border with Colombia and that Chavez was looking for any incident that could be blamed on Colombia or the United States. He cautioned DEA to be especially careful with any work in Tachira State.

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Comment  
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¶6. (S) Arreaza and Reverol seemed eager to convey BRV messages in advance of the Ambassador's May 20 meeting with FM Maduro. Predictably, they took issue with the ONDCP Director's public statements. The reaction to the Ambassador's presence at a low key demand reduction program in one of Caracas' most crime-ridden neighborhoods was somewhat more surprising. At the same time, they gave no indication that the BRV is seriously contemplating resuming CN cooperation with the USG. On the contrary, Justice Minister Chacin is reportedly advocating the BRV not engage in CN cooperation with any foreign government. Arreaza and Reverol also candidly acknowledged that the BRV is anxious to distract attention from the revelations of strong BRV-FARC ties and is prepared to exploit even the smallest incidents along the Venezuelan border with Colombia to that end.

DUDDY